

## NEWS

*His work is play***Cushing is committed to serving the youth of the community***Part four of a continuing series about Duxbury's town officials*By ANDRIA FARRELL  
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DUXBURY – Even the sun hasn't had its first cup of coffee when Recreation Director Gordon Cushing gets up in the morning, especially in the summertime.

Cushing tries to get into his office by 5:30 a.m. to get some paperwork done and prepare for the day. His staff arrives at 7:30 a.m. and many of the camps don't begin until 8, which leaves Cushing with a few hours of solitude before the chaos of his day begins to unfold.

This Duxbury native has been providing summer fun and education to local youth for the past 17 years. After graduating from Duxbury High, Cushing followed family tradition and attended UMass Amherst, where he earned degrees in history and education. At 22 and fresh out of college, he returned to his roots to teach

history and coach jayvee basketball and baseball at Duxbury High.

Cushing taught from 1985 until 1989, when he read a newspaper ad seeking a recreation director for Duxbury. Cushing took a year's leave of absence from teaching and accepted the job on a trial basis. Needless to say, the temporary leave of absence became a permanent career change.

When Cushing took the position, the department needed revitalization and he was given three years to shape it up.

"I had three years to turn it around when I first started," Cushing says. "Seventeen years later, I'm still here."

One plus for the programs, Cushing explains, is that many of them pay for themselves. With limited funding available, the Recreation Department costs the town almost nothing. It provides a great service to the community and breaks even at the end of the budget year.

Cushing's pet offering is the recreational basketball program, he was

instrumental in starting it when he first became director. For three weeks each summer, Cushing coaches the program while also running his department. On a per-week basis, the basketball program is the department's biggest source of revenue. And Cushing feels it's important he maintain a hands-on approach.

Cushing also coached the Duxbury High basketball team for the past seven years; his tenure as a Dragon coach now covers 21 years.

"I love coaching, it's my passion," Cushing says. "My favorite thing is to coach high school kids."

Like other town buildings, the recreation department facilities could use a little revamping. Since Cushing has been onboard, the recreation department has moved five times. He says he would like to see his department get a permanent home.

The town Recreation Department includes more than just the Percy Walker Pool and assorted summer camps. Cushing also oversees the grounds of the golf course and town

sports fields, the lifeguards at the beaches and the Ellison playground.

With constant cuts in the town budget, money gets tighter and tighter every year. Cushing says he always manages to keep up with maintenance of the facilities, but major improvements will require significant funding increases or grants.

The department provides 13 different summer programs for kids, and takes on 120 additional part-time staff members during the summer months: 40 in pool programs and 90 spread across the many other recreation programs. Many of these employees are high school students gaining first-time job experience or college students home for the summer.

Cushing's deep Duxbury roots provide a great advantage. He was not only raised here, but he and his wife, Kristine, are raising their daughters, Melissa 13, and Cassy, 11, in Duxbury, as well. He is a longtime mentor to the youth of the community.



STAFF PHOTO/ANDRIA FARRELL  
Gordon Cushing

While many look forward to a long, lazy summer of rest and relaxation, Cushing heads into his busy season. A lot of prep work and planning go into the summer programs, Cushing says, adding that a good staff is the most important key to a smooth summer.

"If you don't have great people, you will have a problem," he said. "We have excellent support."